

EDITORIAL SECTION

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PULLING TOGETHER FOR CHILD HEALTH

A NEW feature of the Annual Meeting in Chicago this year is the occurrence at the same time and place of the annual meeting of the American Child Health Association. Community of interest has led our Child Hygiene Section and this large voluntary association to join hands in the presentation of programs of common appeal. In one or more instances also these sessions are participated in by the Sections of Public Health Nursing, Health Officers and Public Health Education. This action lends strength and richness to the program and to the discussions.

Neither the identity nor independence of thought and action of the participating groups is interfered with by this step and, on the positive side, understanding and singleness of purpose are greatly enhanced.

Great strides have been made in child hygiene in the last 20 years. In fact, the child hygiene program might be called a product of the 20th century. Proceeding along individual lines, divergence in methods and procedures in different communities has been inevitable. The great problem facing the child health worker is so to unravel the connecting threads of cause and effect in order to enable him to identify the activities which are effectual and to distinguish them from efforts that are imposing and theoretically justifiable, but whose results are relatively inconsequential.

These joint programs give a wide array of contributions from leaders in the field of maternal and child hygiene. So accustomed have we become to declining death rates, such as in tuberculosis, diphtheria, and infant mortality, that the failure of a specific cause of death to conform to this tendency challenges our attention. One of the factors that has been particularly difficult to overcome is maternal deaths.

An entire session is given over to this subject. Here the obstetrician, the gynecologist, the official and unofficial health worker, have the opportunity to pool their experiences and seek a strengthened union of effort. Infant hygiene, preschool health supervision, medical, dental and nursing service, and educational methods in health are topics of other sessions which will be discussed from many angles. Out of this exchange of ideas are bound to arise clarification of thought and renewed incentive to productive effort.

A perusal of the preliminary program of the joint meetings discloses that there is an increasing tendency toward critical self-analysis and research—research into the fundamentals. There is also evident an earnest desire to perfect organization and eliminate waste motion. Further, it is apparent that a finer discrimination is being exercised as to what findings from the bacteriological and the social laboratory are suitable for wide application in health practice.

PERMANENCY OF TENURE

AMONG the oldest interests of the American Public Health Association is the attainment of permanency of administrative tenure. It has long been recognized that with frequent shifting of administrative heads continuity of program and satisfactory service for local and state health work are practically impossible. The development of effective community health service depends upon sound policies and practices, well established and accepted generally by the public. Time and steadfastness of purpose both are requisites of community education. It is a matter of general comment that transient tenure, with its attendant political complications and vacillating policies, is the most significant difference between health administration here, in the United States, and that in Europe.

There are enough splendid examples of great accomplishments by health officers who have directed state or local services for continuous periods of twenty-five years or more, to prove the applicability of the principle under our form of government; yet many cities and states continue the wasteful and inefficient practice of changing health officers with every change of general administration.

A committee of the Association, appointed within the year to study and deal with this question, will hold an open conference the first day of the Annual Meeting at Chicago to consider the many aspects of the problem and to receive suggestions as to how such a committee may effectively serve the members of the Association.